

NCLS member_Steve Verigin comments.txt

From: Steve Verigin [sverigin@geiconsultants.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2010 3:00 PM
To: Wade, Douglas J HQ02
Subject: COE - 2010-0007 Levee Vegetation Variance

Categories: Red Category

Dear Mr. Wade:

My name is Steve Verigin. I am a registered civil and geotechnical engineer in the State of California where I have practiced civil engineering for the past 32 years. I currently work for GEI Consultants, Inc. as the Western Region Chief Geotechnical Engineer and was formerly with the State of California, Department of Water Resources for 27 years where I served as Chief of the Division of Safety of Dams and Deputy Director for Public Safety. I also presently serve on the National Committee for Levee Safety (NCLS).

I have reviewed the above document and have the following comments:

General

1. I believe the policy has been well prepared. It gives clear purpose for its creation and clearly identifies the components and steps required to obtain the variance.
2. The process for approving the variance may appear long; however, I believe the progressive approval process is well thought out and appropriate.
3. I think the reasons for granting approval: "To preserve, protect and/or enhance natural resources and Native American rights", may be too narrow.

I think it is well stated that the sponsor must demonstrate that structural integrity will not be compromised by the variance. However, I think that a variance could be granted on the basis that the vegetation poses no threat to the structural integrity of the levee. This would allow vegetation on the levee, 10 feet below the waterside crest for reasons other than the environment and Native American rights. The safety of the levee would have to be supported by an engineering report and would be the responsibility of the sponsor as with variances granted for the environment and Native American rights. The reason for including this provision would be to allow sponsors discretion in vegetation control as long as they take responsibility and demonstrate safety.

Specific

9. Special Considerations
e. (comment: I agree with the physical limitations for the variance.)
9. Special Considerations
h. ... "modify or alter" a federally authorized levee system in PL 84-99 program...
(Comment: Not clear what "modify or alters" means)

II. Environmental Compliance

(Comment: It would be helpful if a draft criteria or guideline could be provided to identify the anticipated type of required environmental documentation for given activities.)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important document. If you or others have questions or require clarification of my comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Steve Verigin

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